

THE RESULT of this game is of no real interest — what does matter is that the 22 players managed to survive the 90 minutes without sustaining serious injury.

In all truthfulness this match should really not have been staged. The pitch was extremely treacherous, bone-hard with long ruts and divots carved out where a player could so easily turn an ankle or cause more serious injury.

In fact, the referee decided only ten minutes before the scheduled start to allow the game to commence. It was a shame he did not call it off, because there was no real winner. Although Wanderers actually took both points, there was very little constructive football to materialise.

Testimony to the fact that players found the conditions awkward was that some 30 fouls were conceded. A great number of these were accidental owing to the player, once having committed himself, being unable to halt his progress into the tackle, although it should, equally, be pointed out that Ilford conceded 20 of these infringements.

What really is the point of players risking life and limb on such surfaces? On a day when the majority of referees erred on the side of caution both Wanderers' and Ilford players were forced to play in a match which, I suspect, they would have wished to be cancelled.

With no other matches being played in the Isthmian League and with Enfield and Hendon being involved in cup competitions, Wanderers' two points lifts them to within one point of Enfield on equal terms with Hendon and Sutton.

For Wycombe, newcomer Peter Slater finally managed to make his first team debut — postponed by the weather last week — and after showing a few promising moves in the opening 45 minutes faded in the second period.

It would be fair, however, to add that he received precious little co-operation from his new colleagues and was often forced to roam inside in order to look for possession.

Mistakes from players on both sides flowed at regular intervals and at times the match had a touch of comedy of errors about it as players fought desperately to keep control of both their feet and the ball.

After 15 minutes of scrappy work — hardly surprising when considering the conditions — Wanderers scored what proved to be the vital goal of the match.

From a Worley free-kick just outside the box, Samuels stole a great slice of space in the 18-yard area, between four visiting defenders, before bending low to send a short-range header whipping past James's right hand.

Clumsy tackles were inevitable although Ilford sometimes relied a little too much on the physical element of the game.

Tony Horseman, playing his first Isthmian League game since re-joining, had one of those quiet afternoons, except for one run shortly before the interval, when he jinked past two defenders to see James narrow the angle well and cut out the danger.

Ten minutes before the welcome half-time breather Wanderers suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, strung together one of their best moves of the entire season.

Five players took part in this comprehensive move which transferred the ball from deep inside Wycombe's half to Ilford. Thomas snuffed out some impending danger in Wanderers' goal area by slipping a pass to Worley, Temel, as he so often does with so much relish, moved up on the overlap and slipped an astute pass along the right wing.

Now Barry Baker took up the running and his cross was met by Worley's head some 20 yards out and James somehow managed to leap back and finger-tip the ball over the bar to safety.

After the interval the standard of football deteriorated, and as the cold evening air began to set in, there was very little taking place on the field to capture one's complete attention.

Samuels came desperately close to increasing Wycombe's slender advantage when he fired a fierce drive against the intersection of post and bar.

A near suicidal back-pass from Smith nearly threw another goal Wanderers' way, when Horseman easily raced forward to intercept, but his shot went inches wide of the left-hand corner.

That just about sums up the goalmouth action and as the players trooped off, having tried to offer their best and master the impossible conditions, I cannot help thinking it would not have been a serious blow to the fixture planners had the players spent the afternoon in front of a warm fire.

Wycombe 1 Ilford 0

A STUBBORN Ilford defence limited the margin of Wycombe's victory to one goal from skipper Keith Samuels, who converted a cross from Worley early on.

With inside forward Tony Horseman, back after resigning briefly from the club, and newcomer Peter Slater from Hendon on the left wing, Wycombe maintained marked superiority throughout.

But there was again a lack of real punch in the middle and the nearest attempts came from right winger Len Worley, who had three near misses. Nevertheless the home side fully merited the Isthmian League points.